

Steal This Hook! **Three-Dragon Ante**

By Doug Beyer



Last month we saw the release of [Three-Dragon Ante](#), which is both a real card game and the game-within-a-game of choice in taverns and gambling parlors across the **D&D** world. In honor of its release, today's Steal This Hook! takes Three-Dragon Ante as its theme and helps you weave the game into your **Eberron** campaign. Enjoy.

The Highest Stakes

It's not surprising that the party's rogue would owe debts to Vrogath the Lucky, infamous crimelord of the Sharn undercity. The grizzled, bespectacled orc helps many adventuring rogues get their start. But when it comes to debt, Vrogath doesn't forgive or forget. And now that the PC rogue has done well for herself, it's time for Vrogath to collect -- with interest.

It starts with some socioeconomic pressure -- local merchants won't take the PC's money or render service to her or her compatriots. It develops into more direct, physical pressure -- a rough encounter with Vrogath's thugs under a dripping Sharn skybridge. It ends with a meeting with Vrogath himself, and an offer. If the PC agrees to a game of "platinum ante" (Three-Dragon Ante played for platinum pieces) in the amount of the rogue's debt, she can walk away debt-free and rich besides. But Vrogath is notoriously "lucky" -- in that he cheats mercilessly -- and the game would be played on his turf. Can the PCs beat Vrogath at his own game? If "victory" would mean an enraged Sharn crimelord, is there any winning hand?



The Brass Assassin

It's not just rogues and criminals who enjoy a game of cards -- many a gambit is played in the marble halls of courtesans. But when a murder occurs over a game of platinum ante, no expense is spared to find the perpetrator.

The killer used contact poison on a Three-Dragon Ante deck -- in particular, it is believed, on a Brass Dragon card -- to murder a beloved advisor of Lord Barwith ir'Stramm, a noble in western Breland. Lord Barwith himself was in that game and feels he was the intended target of the poison; he hires the adventurers to serve as his personal investigators of the crime.

In a dramatic scene, the players pose as members of Lord Barwith's court to trick the killer into striking again. You, as the DM, may secretly choose one of the cards to be poisoned -- the 9-strength Brass Dragon, for example -- and watch to see whether a player draws it over several gambits. You could also have players roll a Fortitude save -- whether they're poisoned or not -- whenever any of the players draws a Brass Dragon card. Has the killer dared to strike again using the same methods? Might he or she have switched what card is poisoned, or

poisoned multiple cards? Can the heroes trace the source of the card tampering? What if Lord Barwith wasn't the target, and his advisor was key to some enemy plot?

Riches at the Roadhouse

Goradra Roadhouse, an adventurers' saloon whose foundation nearly teeters on the Goradra Gap in the Mror Holds (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 193), is a breeding ground for the gambling debts of fortune-hunters. The Gap, the deepest and possibly the most chillingly mysterious chasm in all of Khorvaire, draws fortune-seekers from around the plane. Some never return from their optimistic spelunk, but a lucky few come back drunk on adventure and laden with treasure, looking for ale, a place to rest, and a game of platinum ante or ten.



The party members have many opportunities to use Three-Dragon Ante to gain information or seek adventure here. Do they butter up the drunken barbarian during a game to discover his route to a potential dragonshard hoard? Do they throw a game to a reticent ranger to gauge his effectiveness as a Gap guide? Do they stage a high-stakes game with a limb on the line to flush out a thieving Jhorash'tar orc miner? Do they simply challenge the best, richest player in the saloon to an all-or-nothing gambit to fund their expedition down into the chasm?

A Dragon's Gambit

The secret society of Argonnessen dragons known as the Chamber has disguised agents throughout Khorvaire. One such agent is Err'a'galash, a young bronze dragon posing as the noble Lady Helon of Aundair, who fraternizes freely both with Aundair royalty and with the half-elves of Stormhome. Her mission among humanoid society is to monitor political developments in Aundair and report to her associates in the Chamber any happenings of import to the draconic Prophecy. When Three-Dragon Ante becomes popular among House Lyrandar, however, her draconic pride is insulted; she hates seeing her glorious brethren cast into playing pieces in a mortal betting game. Her egotistical wrath reaches its peak when some suggest that her intellect may not be up to the task of beating Lyrandar's elite players -- and she begins a secret plan to become the most accomplished player in Aundair.

Will a bronze dragon stoop to hiring secret tutors in the play of this mere card game? Might she run back-door tournaments, inviting experts from other nations to help her train for defeating House Lyrandar? Does she suspect that the game actually has something to do with the revelation of Prophecy among Aundair humanoids? Does she favor dragonmarked players, or use some sort of magical trickery to gain the upper hand? Is she a rogue among the Chamber in her interest in the game, or is it a greater concern among dragonkind?

Mini-Hooks

Try these mini-hooks if you want a way to introduce the game into your campaign.

- After a PC wins a particularly topsy-turvy tavern game of copper ante using the Druid card, an impressed shifter invites the PCs to join a higher-stakes game in his hometown in the Eldeen Reaches.
 - A skilled gnomish painter creates a Three-Dragon Ante deck using silver- and gold-laced paints, and the artist's patron hires the PCs to transport it; however, thieves pressure the party to play a gambit or two with the exquisite cards.
 - An old acquaintance asks the changeling PC to substitute for him in tomorrow night's gold dragon match.
 - The PCs notice a wanted poster for an illusionist who has cheated at cards in Karrnathi tournaments.
 - The party meets traveling wilderness profiteers and strike up a rousing game of copper-ante over drinks and a campfire.
 - Under pressure from the Church of the Silver Flame, Thrane lawmakers outlaw gambling within Thrane's borders, causing an influx of Three-Dragon Ante players into Aundair and Breland.
 - The Library of Korranberg plays host to a private collection of historically important Three-Dragon Ante decks, and it stages a festival of games for all comers.
 - The PCs stumble upon a field of ceremonial burial mounds of lizardfolk, where each mound is adorned by stone markers carved with sequential draconic patterns -- an archaic form of the game?
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About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC_Doog.

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